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PTTUZDKW RUEHMJA0096 0082336-UUUU--RUEADNA.

ZNR UUUUU ZZH

P 002336Z JAN 90 ZDK PER UR SVC #0066

~~FM AMEMBASSY MAJURO~~

TO RUEADNA/DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY

RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1813

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//ISA//

INFO RUHOSG/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

RUHHBAA/CDRUSAKA KWAJALEIN NO//CSSD-K/CSSD-KD//

BT

UNCLAS MAJURO 0096

A	I
DIR	RF

~~FOR MG GERALD WATSON DIR EDNA~~ FROM CHIEF OF MISSION
 THOMSEN

DEPT PASS DEPT OF ENERGY AND DEPT OF INTERIOR

E.O. 12958: N/A

SUBJECT: CLEANUP OF RUNIT ISLAND AT ENEWETAK ATOLL

- REF: A. LTR FROM RMI PRESIDENT TO CINCPAC 7 DEC 89

B. USCINCPAC 1810 0030103 DTG 030042Z JAN 90

1. SUMMARY. ENEWETAK ATOLL IN THE REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS (RMI) WAS ONE OF THE TWO MAJOR SITES OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS TESTING IN THE 1940S AND 1950S. ONE OF THE ISLANDS IN THE ATOLL, RUNIT, WAS CONTAMINATED WITH PLUTONIUM DURING THE TESTING. FROM 1977 TO 1980 THE ATOLL UNDERWENT A MAJOR CLEANUP OPERATION, BUT RUNIT WAS NOT COMPLETELY DECONTAMINATED, AND REMAINS THE ONE MAJOR ISLAND IN THE ATOLL NOT HABITABLE. REF A REQUESTED USCINCPAC ASSISTANCE IN EFFECTING THE CLEANUP, AND REF B REFERRED THE MATTER TO AMEMBASSY MAJURO. THIS CABLE FORWARDS THE REQUEST TO CONCERNED WASHINGTON AGENCIES FOR COORDINATED ACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. ON 7 DECEMBER 1989, ACTING RMI PRESIDENT KUNIO LEMARI SENT TO ADMIRAL HUNTINGTON HARDISTY A LETTER REQUESTING CINCPAC ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING FOR THE DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY TO EFFECT DECONTAMINATION OF RUNIT ISLAND IN ENEWETAK ATOLL. THE TEXT IS REPRODUCED BELOW.

3. QUOTE. DEAR ADMIRAL HARDISTY: I AM WRITING TO REQUEST YOUR ASSISTANCE IN ARRANGING FOR THE DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY TO COMPLETE THE CLEANUP OF RUNIT ISLAND AT ENEWETAK ATOLL. ENEWETAK ATOLL WAS ONE OF TWO MAJOR TEST FACILITIES IN THE MARSHALL ISLANDS UTILIZED BY THE UNITED STATES IN THE 1940S AND 1950S FOR TESTING NUCLEAR WEAPONS. IT IS MY UNDERSTANDING THAT THE SOIL IN ONE AREA OF RUNIT ISLAND REMAINS DANGEROUSLY CONTAMINATED WITH THE RADIOACTIVE ELEMENT PLUTONIUM. THE

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CONTAMINATION IS AT SUCH A LEVEL THAT OFFICIALS OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY HAVE ADVISED THE RESIDENTS OF ENEWETAK ATOLL THAT RUNIT ISLAND MUST REMAIN OFF LIMITS INTO THE INDEFINITE FUTURE.

RECENTLY, HOWEVER, IT HAS COME TO MY ATTENTION THAT AN EFFECTIVE MINING TECHNOLOGY HAS BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY FOR EXTRACTING PLUTONIUM FROM SOIL AND THAT SUCH A TECHNOLOGY IS NOW BEING USED AT JOHNSTON ATOLL, WHICH, LIKE RUNIT ISLAND, WAS CONTAMINATED WITH PLUTONIUM DURING THE COURSE OF TESTING NUCLEAR WEAPONS. IT IS THE REQUEST OF MY GOVERNMENT THAT, ONCE THE CLEANUP HAS BEEN COMPLETED AT JOHNSTON ATOLL, THE PLUTONIUM MINING PLANT BE REASSEMBLED AT RUNIT ISLAND AND THAT THE DECONTAMINATION OF THAT ISLAND BE COMPLETED.

DURING A THREE YEAR PERIOD (1977 -1980), THE DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY UNDERTOOK A MASSIVE CLEANUP OF ENEWETAK ATOLL. THE OPERATION INVOLVED THE REMOVAL OF LARGE QUANTITIES OF SOIL FROM FIVE DIFFERENT ISLANDS WITHIN THE ATOLL. WHEREVER THE PLUTONIUM CONTENT OF THE SOIL EXCEEDED SAFETY GUIDELINES, THE SOIL WAS RELOCATED TO A WASTE DISPOSAL SITE. UNFORTUNATELY, A PORTION OF RUNIT ISLAND WAS LEFT UNTREATED. I UNDERSTAND THAT THE DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY HAD INTENDED TO DECONTAMINATE THIS AREA BUT WAS PREVENTED FROM DOING SO BY EITHER A SHORTFALL OF FUNDING OR THE REDEPLOYMENT OF UNITED STATES ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL ASSIGNED TO THE PROJECT.

AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THE CLEANUP HAVING BEEN LEFT INCOMPLETE, THIS MAJOR ISLAND IN ENEWETAK ATOLL REMAINS UNINHABITABLE. SEVERAL YEARS AGO, THE PEOPLE OF ENEWETAK RESUMED RESIDENCE AT ISLANDS IN THE SOUTHERN HALF OF ENEWETAK ATOLL. THEY ARE CURRENTLY CONSIDERING RESETTLING ENJEBI ISLAND IN THE NORTHERN PORTION OF THE ATOLL AND THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT HAS PROVIDED A TRUST FUND TO FINANCE THE RESETTLEMENT AND REPLANTING OF ENJEBI ISLAND. ACCORDING TO UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY REPORTS, RUNIT ISLAND REMAINS THE ONLY MAJOR ISLAND THAT HAD TRADITIONALLY SERVED AS THE RESIDENCE OF ENEWETAKESE PEOPLE AND THAT IS STILL UNINHABITABLE.-- I ASK YOU MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WITH THE DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY TO RESTORE THE ISLAND TO HABITABILITY.

I WOULD FURTHER NOTE THAT THE WASTE DISPOSAL SITE FOR PLUTONIUM CONTAMINATED SOIL FROM THROUGHOUT ENEWETAK ATOLL IS LOCATED ON RUNIT ISLAND. THE CONTAMINATED SOIL WAS DEPOSITED IN A BOMB CRATER AND COVERED BY A CONCRETE DOME. THE WASTE DISPOSAL SITE IS SAFELY SHIELDED AND IS REGULARLY MONITORED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY. THIS AREA WOULD HAVE TO REMAIN A RADIOLOGICAL CONTROL AREA AND SHOULD BE FENCED IN BEFORE RUNIT ISLAND IS RESETTLED OR USED FOR THE CULTIVATION OF FOOD CROPS. I AM INFORMED THAT RUNIT ISLAND REMAINS OFF-LIMITS TO THE

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ENEMETAKESE, NOT BECAUSE OF THE DISPOSAL SITE, BUT BECAUSE THE DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY DID NOT QUITE FINISH UP ITS CLEANUP JOB TEN YEARS AGO.

NOW THAT AN EFFECTIVE TECHNOLOGY HAS BEEN FOUND TO REMOVE PLUTONIUM FROM THE SOIL OF CORAL ATOLLS, I REQUEST THAT THE CLEANUP BE COMPLETED AT RUNIT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THE PEOPLE OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS SHALL BE MOST GRATEFUL FOR YOUR HELP IN CONVEYING THIS REQUEST TO THE DEFENSE NUCLEAR AGENCY. SINCERELY YOURS. (SIGNED) KUNIO D. LEMARI, ACTING PRESIDENT. END QUOTE.

4. ON RECEIVING THE REQUEST FROM ACTING PRESIDENT LEMARI, ADMIRAL HARDISTY REFERRED THE REQUEST TO AMEMBASSY MAJURO BY MEANS OF (REF B. THE TEXT OF REF B WAS CONVEYED TO PRESIDENT AMATA KABUA IN A DIPLOMATIC NOTE DATED 5 JANUARY 1990.

~~FOR GENERAL~~ WATSON: I WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR PERSONAL EVALUATION OF THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST AND YOUR VIEWS ON THE TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS TO RESPOND TO IT.

6. EMBASSY REQUESTS THAT OTHER COGNIZANT AGENCIES COORDINATE WITH DIRECTOR DNA TO DETERMINE THE BEST MEANS OF COMPLETING THE DECONTAMINATION OF RUNIT ISLAND.

7. COMMENT. THE AFTERAFFECTS OF THE NUCLEAR TESTING PROGRAM REMAIN SENSITIVE POLITICAL AND HUMANITARIAN ISSUES IN THE RMI. THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY'S RECENT DECISION TO REEXAMINE THE SAFETY OF RONGELAP ATOLL EARNED WIDESPREAD FAVORABLE COMMENT IN MARSHALLESE POLITICAL CIRCLES AND IN THE LOCAL PRESS. SIMILAR ATTENTION DEVOTED TO RUNIT ISLAND WOULD LIKEWISE PROVE BENEFICIAL FROM POLITICAL AND HUMANITARIAN STANDPOINTS. END COMMENT. THOMSEN

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